



ANGEL ISLAND INSIGHT
THE LAST HOISAN POETS
& DEL SOL QUARTET

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WORLD PREMIERE
HAW MEONG SUEY
MAY 22, 2021

HAW MEONG SUEY, AH NUI

Haw Meong Suey
U. S. born, aw Uk Lun, Hong Ngin Fow
Oakland Chinatown

Haw Meong Suey
Ah Ma, Ah Ba
Ei fahn ngoi heck,
Fed me rice
Ei uk ngoi gee, ei som ngoi jeck
Gave me shelter, clothes to wear

Haw Meng Suey
Nei gow ngoi kwai nui, kwai nui
You taught me bad girl, bad girl
Nei gow ngoi haw nui, haw nui
You taught me good girl, good girl

Ngoi koi see bock thlai how faht
Now I am full of white hair
Ngoi koi see bong jaw sai gai nah gung ngin
I fight for working people in this world

Thank you, Mom, Pop
Haw meong suey, haw meong suey

NELLIE WONG
May 2021

HAW MEONG SUEY: IT'S REALLY TRUE

Mama, gill see ngnoy slai goy nin see,
Mama, long ago when I was young,
Nay wah ngnoy haw meong suey.
You said that I carry good life's water.
Coy see ngnoy bot sip thlom thleuy,
Now that I am eighty three years old,
Ngnoy op nay, jin guh hai wah.
I answer you, it's really TRUE.
Haw Meong Suey, jin guh hai wah.
Good life's water, it's really TRUE.
Haw Meong Suey, Haw Meong Suey,
Good life's water, good life's water,
Jin guh hai wah, jin guh hai wa.
It's really TRUE, it's really TRUE.

FLO OY WONG
April 20, 2021

Haw Meong Suey is a phrase of our ancestral language, Hoisan-wa, that originated in the Pearl River Delta of the People's Republic of China. It means that the person who has it is a vessel of blessings.

THE LAST HOISAN POETS
Genny Lim, Nellie Wong, and Flo Oy Wong -
trace their roots to China's Toisan villages,
home of the Hoisan-wa.

HO MENG-SUEY

Ho Meng-Suey
I said, "Mom, Why don't you learn English?"
All the other kids' parents take ESL classes."
Ma said, "Hmph! If you want to talk to me,
you can talk to me in my language!"
Thlay-yip wah! Nay mawt do m'gay'ok thlai!

Ho meng-suey
Thay-yip wah, Hoisan-paw
The accent's gotta swing like
the tail of the ox pulling its cart
along the Pearl River Delta
Like Ishi, frozen in time
they say you never left China

Ho meng-suey
Hoisan-wah
Language is the boat that delivers me from the homeland
I've never set foot on to the country I call home
Mei-guo, the beautiful country that never was
Your first language is the language of your dreams
But like the sun that will slowly lose its heat and light
and get smaller and smaller to the size of a star one day
Thlee-yip shall remain my mother tongue, my star
as long as I remain

GENNY LIM
May 4, 2021

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